Subject: RELEASE: Legislation Instituting Fee for False Alarms to LAFD Passes City Council
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For Immediate Release -- May 22, 2018

LEGISLATION INSTITUTING FEE FOR FALSE ALARMS TO LAFD PASSES CITY COUNCIL

Legislation authored by Councilmember Mitchell Englander to level fees against owners of residential and commercial property where a false alarm occurs passed the LA City Council today. False alarms trigger an emergency response and take up valuable, life-saving resources and can prevent them from being deployed to where they are most needed.

"This is one of the most important pieces of legislation I have authored and it's been a long time in the making – this will undoubtedly save lives," said Councilmember Mitchell Englander. "False alarms are more than just a nuisance. Every single false alarm takes emergency resources away from real emergencies, increases response time, puts firefighters and paramedics at risk, and jeopardizes the safety of the entire community. By cracking down on these unnecessary and often negligent alarm triggers, we will be able to begin recovering the cost of deployment and provide a deterrent to these incidents."

"False fire alarms create a drain on our resources and have the potential to divert firefighters and paramedics from true emergencies," said Los Angeles Fire Department Chief Ralph Terrazas. "We look forward to working with our City partners to develop this program, which will significantly reduce the number of false fire alarms citywide."

Of the approximately 25,000 automatic alarm based calls the LAFD receives annually, approximately 12,000, or roughly half, are deemed false or unwanted. In the six years since this proposal was introduced, there have been over 70,000 responses by the LAFD to false alarms. The sources of these false alarms are often repeat locations. When estimated at $343 per false alarm deployment, this represents approximately $4.1 million in misdirected resources annually. In the past 6 years, it is estimated to be $24.5 million which is approximately the cost of purchasing 110 basic life support ambulances.

A false alarm fee program already exists for calls to LAPD and is credited with reducing the number of unwanted or false reports from a height 145,000 false alarms in 2009 to 54,000 in 2017. The new LAFD false alarm program would be modeled after the existing LAPD program. First time offenders will be offered the opportunity to attend an online alarm school in lieu of a fee, similar to that of LAPD.

With the passage of this legislation, the City Attorney's office is directed to draft an ordinance detailing the implementation of these fees.

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